

Tips for Managing Holiday Stress

The holiday season is upon us, and it can be a wonderful time filled with family, friends, festivities, and fun. Unfortunately for many, it can also be a time of stressful demands, unrealistic expectations and increased feelings of grief. If you would like to decrease your holiday stress and be kind to yourself in the process, be proactive! Start to think about how you can make your holidays enjoyable and develop a plan for how you will handle the challenges of the season. Here are a few tips to get you started:

- Be real: Most families don't live up to the Currier and Ives holidays depicted in movies and commercials – set realistic expectations. Acknowledge your feelings – it's ok to feel sad around the holidays, especially when separated from loved ones or when there have been losses. Don't force holiday glee.
- Prioritize: Identify what you "want" to do vs. what you think you "must" do. Learn to say yes when you mean it and no when you don't.
- Be flexible: Schedule your shopping, cooking and visits and be flexible when things don't work out as planned. Tell yourself "If I have time I will do this and that. If not, I'll only do that".
- Delegate: Let each family member be responsible for household cleaning, decorating, wrapping etc. Children take pride in their accomplishments – adjust your standards – others will understand.
- Set limits: Don't give in to the holiday "gimmies". "I want, I want" is wearing. Set and stick to a budget. Fight commercialism by focusing on low cost traditions such as baking cookies and enjoying holiday light displays. Remember the reasons for the season.
- Blended families: Select some traditions from both parents and create new ones over time. Give children space and time for themselves.
- Think Healthy: In addition to selecting nutritious, low fat foods, choose baked, broiled or steamed foods. Eat smaller portions at a slow pace and try to eat well before bedtime. Moderate caffeine and alcohol intake and remember to exercise.
- Practice Gratitude: Opt for a positive attitude: Focusing on what you are grateful for can lift your spirits. Practice reframing negative self talk by finding the good in any situation.
- Seek support: In addition to stress, the holiday blues are real. Anxiety and depression are more common than you think and are treatable. For confidential assistance contact the Employee Service Program.

**Employee Service Program
800-521-1377**

Detroit: 313-456-4020 Lansing: 517-373-7630
www.michigan.gov/esp